Carbondale Committee Releases Report

Architect Finds City Hall In 'Restorable Condition'

By RAY RINALDI

According to a report released by the Committee to Restore City Hall, Architect Thomas C. Horlacher of the Scranton-based firm of Palumbo and Horlacher, has found the building to be "in relatively sound and restorable condition."

Horlacher, who volunteered his services to the Committee to Restore City Hall, stated his findings after inspecting the building and said that despite its location in a mining region and years of neglect, the building could be restored.

Horlacher stressed, however, that his inspection was a preliminary observation and should be substantiated by a comprehensive structural survey.

He also emphasized that certain items of work must be undertaken in the very near future in order to curb the possibility of further deterioration to vital portions of the building.

The architect said in his report that items which must be taken care of include roof repairs, painting and repair of existing exterior brick masonry, sealing of existing window openings, particularly at the upper levels which are presently unglazed or protected by deteriorated wood sash, installation of concrete footers beneath interior wood columns at basement level, specifically those resting on earth, and repair of masonry "shelf" supports for roof framing at the attic level.

Additional items which also must be taken care of, according to Horlacher, but which are not presently contributing to the building's physical deterioration include: Building code improvements, such as proper means of egress from all levels, emergency lighting, alarm systems, including smoke detection devices. Also, energy related improvements, including thermal pane windows, attic insulation, and heating system modifications; replacement of antiquated plumbing and electrical systems, and general refurbishing of interior and exterior finishes including restoration of "remodeled" interior areas.

Horlacher said that Step One in the restoration of the building should be the stabilization of the existing structure, to halt further deterioration which could eventually result in serious structural damage and increased renovation costs. Stabilization would include roof, masonry and window opening repairs.

Horlacher suggested that the stabilization effort could be a focus for future fund raising efforts since many of the necessary repairs could be accomplished with relatively modest sums of money.

Step Two of Horlacher's report was renovation of the building. Here again the architect suggested that the committee could solicit funds, but stressed that it would be unrealistic to believe that the committee could raise the type of money necessary to renovate the entire structure, inside and out.

Regarding the total renovation of the building, Horlacher said the committee should assume the role of "promoter" and in that capacity could provide direction for the duration of the renovation effort, serving as a catalyst in such important decisions as the future use of the building and methods of financing.

The architect summarized his report by saying that City Hall "is a most impressive landmark" and has endured well considering its many years of hard service.

Horlacher stated that at an estimated renovation cost in excess of $60 per square foot, the committee must establish realistic goals and priorities, and that the immediate decision at hand is to determine, in conjunction with City officials and qualified market analysts, the highest and best use for the structure in today's marketplace.